

E  
97  
.C45  
1870  
ANTH

1101

# The Standard.

VOL I., No. 1.—MAY, 1870.

BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY.

1885

LIBRARY

## THE INDIANS.

BY L. MARIA CHILD.

IF I should ever enter a pulpit to preach, I would take for my text, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find *faith* on the earth?" Whenever trying emergencies occur in human affairs, we find men prone to shuffle off responsibility by compromise, or to transfer it to posterity by resorting to temporary expedients, admitted to be wrong in themselves, but advocated as the necessity of the moment. Whenever a new occasion for the application of old truths arrives, men in this way betray their total want of faith in eternal principles of right and wrong; which is, in reality, a distrust of God's government of the world by universal and invariable laws. In whatever form Truth makes its advent, it meets this want of faith on the earth.

One would think we might have learned by this time that there is the same ground-work of human nature in all varieties of the human race, and that the same influences which tend to develop what is good or evil in one class of men will have a similar effect on another class; that being dealt with justly and humanely tends to make men just and humane; that

having truth and honesty practiced toward them, inspires men with respect for truth and honesty; that deriving profit from labor makes men industrious; and that having sure protection for life and property renders them peaceable. Yet men thought that the whip was more efficient than wages to get work out of the black man; and now the approved method of teaching red men not to commit murder is to slaughter their wives and children! General SHERIDAN officially reports that the troops under his command killed "ninety women and fifty children; none of the children twelve years old, and many of them in their mothers' arms." From other sources we learn that most of these little ones were sick with small-pox. Yet he seems to expect great credit because his soldiers spared "eighteen women and nineteen children; none of the children under three years old; some of whom were wounded."

Shame on General SHERIDAN! Everlasting shame! If I were to pass him in the street, I would avoid even the touch of his shadow. Some of the Indians had committed horrid atrocities, and the safety of frontier



settlements required that they should be punished ; but indiscriminate slaughter of helpless women and innocent babies is not war—it is butchery ; it is murder. The rebels practiced cruelties on our soldiers unsurpassed by the worst barbarities of the Indians. Would General SHERIDAN have slaughtered *their* women and babies ? Would he have adopted such a mode of warfare with *any* white people upon earth, under *any* amount of provocation ? Shame on General SHERIDAN for perpetrating such outrages on a people because they were poor, and weak, and despised ! Shame on General SHERMAN for sanctioning it ! They have tarnished their laurels and disgraced the epaulets they wear. It behooves the American people, if they have any respect for the laws of humanity, or any regard for the reputation of their country, to proclaim aloud that such reckless butchery is not according to their ideas of civilized warfare. The annals of our country have received an indelible stain by this transaction, like the ineffaceable blot on English history occasioned by the wholesale slaughter of Highlanders at Glencoe ; including aged men and little boys, and the turning out of women to perish with hunger and cold. That onslaught, of infamous memory, occurred nearly two hundred years ago, and it is to be hoped that England could not now muster a sufficient number of Governors of Jamaica and Captains of the Bombay to undertake another such a murderous job. If she can, let *us*, at least, not enter into competition with her for such black and bloody pages of history. I did think we had advanced considerably in civilization ; but lo ! here, in the last half of the nineteenth century, our model military heroes are found shooting defenseless women and sick babies ! And a still more discourag-

ing symptom is that the press is not roused by universal indignation. The Boston *Journal* quotes without comment General SULLY's remark that he "hopes the Piegan massacre will teach the Indians some respect for the government." An admirable method, assuredly, for teaching respect for government ! Such a remark is indeed a *Sully*.

Do not suppose for a moment that I have no feeling for the white settlers of the frontier. They are in a horrible situation, surrounded by savages, whom we have exasperated by generations of wrong, and degraded by many years of whisky-guzzling. They *must* be protected ! But let Justice be blind to color, and hold her scales with an even hand. Let an Indian who murders a white be punished in the same way that a white is punished who murders an Indian ; and let both have the same fair chance for lawful trial. If their depredations and outrages make military interference necessary, let war be carried on as it is with white people who commit outrages on life or property. It is more than can be expected of human nature that the white frontier settlers, living as they do in the midst of deadly peril, should think dispassionately of the Indians, or treat them fairly. It is not in the nature of things, that they should coolly reflect upon the antecedent causes which have made the Indian what he is, or upon the present influences which inevitably keep him what he is. If a white settler finds his family murdered by an Indian, he does not ask himself, "Was this man's family murdered by a white man ? and if so, is it not natural that the same revengeful feelings should be excited in *his* bosom which are now excited in *mine* ?" He asks himself no such questions. He is filled with hatred to the Indians, and he shoots the



first Indian he sees, without knowing whether he is at all implicated in the murder or not. Indeed, the shooting of Indians is habitual sport with white adventurers in that region. When General FREMONT and his companions were exploring California, their own record shows that when they spied an Indian it was their habit to aim a rifle at him, the same as they would at a wild beast. Perhaps the stranger thus ruthlessly shot had never done any injury to the whites; no matter—he had a red skin, and that was sufficient justification. This is the legitimate result of Anglo-Saxon arrogance, which brands all the rest of the human family as “inferior races,” and treats them as if they had no rights which high civilization is bound to respect.

It is said, over and over again, that the Indians are devils. If they are, it is no wonder; for the course we have pursued toward them has been well adapted to make them so. Years ago, I was at an Anti-Slavery meeting in Boston when somebody repeated the threadbare assertion that the negro slaves were “a lazy set of liars and thieves.” “And if they are,” retorted GEORGE THOMPSON, “whose fault is it? You push people into hell, and then complain that they smell of brimstone.” It was a bold metaphor, not suited to ears polite; but I quote it because it exactly describes our relations with the Indians. The tribes, as we found them in this country, had many noble traits mixed with their savageness. They never broke their word or violated a treaty; they never ceased to be grateful for any kindness they had received; and they never treated female prisoners with indecency. They were terribly revengeful; but that trait of human nature has been conspicuous always and everywhere among uncivilized or half-civilized people. It

is the natural indication of the undeveloped growth of society. The Highland clans that were at feud pursued each other with unrelenting fury, from generation to generation; but they are a peaceable, law-abiding people now. In Corsica, families that were at enmity were universally branded with infamy if they failed to kill each other’s descendants, down to the remotest generations; but this horrible custom, called The Vendetta, has nearly disappeared. The North-American Indians, being divided into numerous tribes, constantly at war with each other, were systematically trained to be ferocious, cruel, and revengeful, because they supposed it to be a necessity of their situation; and it is much to be regretted that our mode of warfare with them has not been calculated to imbue them with better ideas. From the earliest times to the present day, we have never observed the same rules of warfare with them that we do with civilized people. There might be some plausible pretext for imitating their savage ways in the early settlement of the country, when they were numerous and powerful, and white settlers were few and weak; but no such excuse is admissible now that we are million-handed, and they are a poor miserable remnant. The New-York *Evening Post* says of SHERIDAN’S massacre, “There is nothing like it in the annals of our country.” For the honor of the United States, I wish it were so; but unfortunately it is not. When General HARNEY attacked the Sioux Indians, at Ash Hollow, women and children were massacred. General HARNEY says it was done by one of his subordinates, unauthorized; but I find no record that the unauthorized subordinate was punished, as he would have been if he had tried such an experiment on any civilized peo-



ple. When the Cheyenne village of Indians was sacked and burned by soldiers in Colorado, Major WYNKOOP ordered the remnant of the Indians to move near to the United States fort, promising them military protection; and about five hundred of those hunted wretches encamped near the fort. A new commander soon came, who renewed the promise that they should be protected. But the Third Colorado Regiment dashed down upon them at daylight, and slaughtered them indiscriminately. Women praying piteously for mercy were shot, and babies were stabbed and scalped. In view of such facts, can we deny that we have stimulated the Indians to barbarity?

General SHERIDAN states that BLACK KETTLE and his band always ravished their female prisoners; but he does not inform us whether it was done in reprisal for similar outrages on Indian women. It certainly is a new feature in the history of the red men. The early settlers of New-England were disposed to paint Indians in very black colors; but they testified that, while they were infernally cruel to captured women, they invariably treated them with decency. This was, in fact, a natural result of their stoical training, which taught them to be ashamed of being mastered by the senses. On this subject, also, I am sorry to believe that the influence of white men has been the worst possible. Father BEESON told me that white traders and soldiers violated the wives and daughters of Indians with entire impunity. Husbands and fathers could obtain no redress at law, if they sought it; and if they attempted to resist, troops were called, and a massacre followed. Father BEESON testified not merely what he had heard, but what he positively knew, as a resident in the region where such outrages were per-

petually occurring. Of course, such *must* be the state of things wherever one class in the community looks down upon another as an inferior race. We all know what protection negro women received at the hands of their masters and drivers. What reason Indians have for trusting to our laws for redress of their wrongs may be inferred from General SULLY's own statement. He says "a harmless old man and a boy" were shot in the streets, in open daylight, by some citizens of Montana; and adds, "I think I can arrest the murderers, but I doubt very much whether I can convict them in any court." Is it wonderful that rapes and murders, for which the law affords no redress, and public opinion offers no sympathy, should be revenged by similar outrages?

Even the good we have tried to do these unfortunate tribes has been done most injudiciously. They have been kept in a perpetual state of dependence on our bounty—national paupers, in fact; and whoever submits to be a pensioner necessarily parts with his manhood. Dishonest agents have systematically defrauded them of the promised goods and provisions, and thus added perpetual distrust and wrangling to the inevitable bad effects of habitual dependence. General SHERIDAN says: "The Indian is a lazy vagabond; he never labors." Certainly our mode of dealing with him is ingeniously contrived to make him so. What little he has, he holds on sufferance, and with a continual feeling of insecurity. General SHERIDAN says: "The government has always been very liberal to the Indians. The lands allotted to them have always been of the very best character." But the Indians have learned by bitter experience that whenever their lands are wanted by white men



they will surely be routed, by one process or another. In such cases, treaties have always proved mere ropes of sand. The inhabitants of Bozeman City bring it as a grave accusation against the Indian, that "he has no faith in treaties." He must have a marvelous capacity for belief if he *does* put any faith in our treaties, after the accumulated experience of two hundred years. They add, "He makes pledges and promises, with intent to disregard them whenever interest or caprice shall dictate." In what school did he learn that? No trait of Indian character has been so generally commended as their observance of treaties. General HOUSTON, who lived much among them, testified heartily to that effect; and we are told that General HARNEY, "who has had fifty years' experience with the Indians, frequently declared that he never knew one of them to violate his plighted faith, or the rites of hospitality."

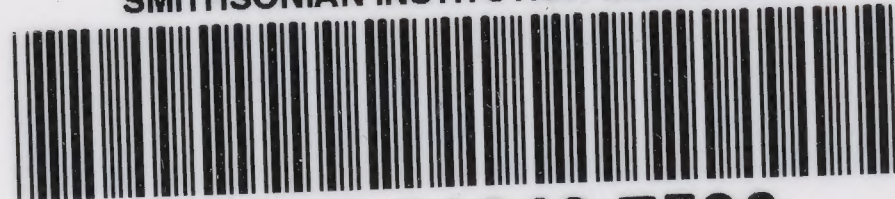
The plain truth is, our influence has made the Indians worse, instead of better, than we found them. The question is, what can be done to bring any thing like order out of this frightful chaos? Shall we, in good faith, try to raise them out of their forlorn and desperate condition, or shall we allow them to be exterminated at the point of the bayonet? General SHERMAN signed his name to a "Report of the Indian Peace Commission," published some two years ago, from which I make the following extract: "If it be said that, because they are savages, they should be exterminated, we answer that, aside from the *humanity* of the suggestion, it would prove extremely difficult. If money considerations are permitted to weigh, it costs less to civilize than to kill. Among civilized men, war usually springs from a sense

of injustice. *The best possible way, then, to avoid war, is to do no act of injustice.* When we learn that the same rule holds good with Indians, the chief difficulty is removed. It is said our wars with them have been almost constant. Have we been uniformly unjust? We answer unhesitatingly, Yes."

Yet General SHERMAN sanctioned General SHERIDAN's massacre of women and babies!

That Indians are incapable of civilization, I believe to be as untrue as the assertion that negroes will not work without the driver's whip. Individuals among them have become highly civilized and educated. When the Cherokees were harried out of Georgia, they had brought their farms under good cultivation, had established schools and manufactories, and printed a newspaper in Cherokee, with an English translation. The Indian Agricultural Fair in New-York, a year ago, proved them fully capable of excelling in various mechanical and manufacturing branches of industry; and the Indian schools in the same State manifested most encouraging progress. How shall the demoralized tribes of the West be brought into a similar state? First and foremost, by laws at once strict and impartial. The crimes of individuals must not be visited on whole villages. The Indian must feel assured that he will certainly suffer for crimes against white people, and that white people will be just as certainly equally punished for crimes against *him*. The whisky-dealers must be driven away. The Indians must be incited to agricultural and mechanical labor, and be rewarded with premiums for success. They must have reason to feel perfectly secure about the possession of the land they cultivate. If certain benefits were granted as a reward for substituting the





English language in place of Indian dialects, it might have a good effect. Missionaries ought to pay particular attention to these people, and try to adapt their teaching to their ignorant condition. If some of the civilized Indians could help in such mission-work, they might do more than others to change hunters into farmers.

But I do not believe that harmony will prevail so long as they exist as independent tribes in our midst. There was never peace on the borders of England and Scotland till clans were abolished, and they all became one people, under one government. There has been no trouble with the Indians in Canada, because they are not divided into tribes, but all form an integral part of the body politic. If the Indian could earn his bread, and be secure in the possession of it; if he could vote for the laws that govern him, and feel that he is really and truly acknowledged as an American citizen, it would make a man of him; and his vicinity would prove a blessing instead of a curse. Mr. NAST, whose illustrations in *Harper's Weekly* evince as much moral rectitude as they do artistic ingenuity, has made a picture of General GRANT investing an Indian with a coat, which has a vote in one pocket and a tax-bill in the other. Tomahawk and whiskey-bottle are laid on the shelf,

and plow, hoe, spelling-book, and newspaper have taken their place. That picture presents the true solution of the problem. So far, General GRANT has manifested great wisdom and humanity in the agencies he has employed for the improvement of these degraded people; and I trust the counsel of violent and reckless men will have no power to change his judicious course.

This subject is painful and wearisome to me; and there is so much prejudice and passion in the field, that I write with little hope. But when I think of the good monk TELEMACHUS, his example inspires me with fresh courage. When enslaved gladiators were killing each other, upon compulsion, for the entertainment of the Roman populace, he sprang on the arena and loudly proclaimed that the custom was wicked, cruel, and brutalizing. The populace were accustomed to think that gladiators had no rights or feelings which Romans were bound to respect, and the man who pleaded for them was killed on the spot. But the words he had uttered sank into some hearts, and took root there; and the fruit they bore was the abolition of these barbarous gladiatorial shows. Would that my weak voice could do something to arrest the insane and cruel disregard of Indian rights and feelings.

